

SABBATAI ZEVI

צענטראלע יידישע ביבליאטעק
אין פרעסע ארכיוו

SABBATAI ZEVI



Nathan Azati



SABETHA SEBI
Vermeynden Messias Der Ioden

Sabbatai Zevi

SABBATAI ZEVI

A TRAGEDY IN THREE ACTS
AND SIX SCENES WITH
A PROLOGUE AND
AN EPILOGUE

BY

SHOLOM ASH

Authorized Translation from the Russian Version

BY

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ILLUSTRATIONS

The Messiah, the Son of David, will come into the world only when all men shall become righteous or all men sinners.

Babylonian Talmud.

CHARACTERS

SABBATAI ZEVI.
ABRAHAM YAKHINI, *his prophet.*
SAMUEL PRIMO, *his secretary.*
MORDECAI HASID, *his apostle.*
MATTATHIAS BLOCH, *his apostle.*
SARRAF-BASHI JOSEPH RAPHAEL, *chief tax-collector in Cairo, his adherent.*
NATHAN AZATI, *his prophet.*
SARAH, *his prophetess.*
LEAH, RACHEL } *his former wives.*
NEHEMIAH COHEN, *a prophet of God.*
FIRST, SECOND, THIRD } *old men.*
FIRST, SECOND, THIRD } *cabalists.*
FIRST, SECOND, THIRD } *prophets.*
A DEVOUT HEBREW.
A TALL OLD JEW.
HAKIM-BASHI GVIDAM, *physician to the Sultan.*
SHEIKH UL-ISLAM, *the Supreme Mollah, head of the Mohammedan faith.*
SULTAN MOHAMMED IV.
MUFTI VANNI.
KAIMAKAM* OF ADRIANOPLE.

*Prefect.

CHARACTERS

FIRST, SECOND — *envoys from Polish Jews.*
ISAAC NAAR, ABRAHAM PEREIRA — *envoys from the Jews of Amsterdam.*
Men, women, youths and maidens, boys and girls.
SCENE: *Jerusalem, Poland, Cairo, Gallipoli.*
TIME: *second half of the seventeenth century.*

PROLOGUE

The Western Wall

A lofty old wall. Large square stone slabs lie piled up like a sepulchral monument beneath which the nation lies buried. In the crevices wild grass grows; knotty branches covered with moss give a mournful impression from afar, as if they had sprung from prayers and tears that had been poured out upon the stone. Dark, gray spots are on the walls, like the dead faces of wild creatures; burying deeply within it the great secret of the exile; solitary the wall towers over the neighborhood, here lower, there higher. Yonder, where it begins, four pine trees sway to and fro. Far behind the wall a white mountain rises. The summit of the mountain is not visible. Here and there on the slope grow isolated olive trees, burned by the sun and dust. All the surface of the mountain is covered with fallen tomb stones. In the foreground near the wall some Jews are sitting on the ground with unshod feet, holding in their hands large prayer

books; in various places in the cracks of the cliff burning wax candles are visible; the Jews sit and read the Lamentations of Jeremiah. It is the evening before Tish'a be-Ab (the anniversary of the destruction of the Temple). Everywhere there is a peculiar, oppressive light like that before a thunder storm.

FIRST OLD MAN

(*Reads aloud verses from the Lamentations of Jeremiah to a well-known motif*) "Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach."

THE PEOPLE

(*After him*) "Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach."

SECOND OLD MAN

(*From another corner*) "Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens."

THE PEOPLE

(*Repeat*) "Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens."

THIRD OLD MAN

(*In a soft voice*) "We are orphans and fatherless, our mothers are as widows."

THE PEOPLE

"We are orphans and fatherless, our mothers are as widows."

SABBATAI ZEVI *appears on the mountain with his disciples.*

SABBATAI ZEVI

(*To his disciples*) Look upon that wall. Hearken to those prayers which struggle like wingless doves and cannot lift themselves to the gates of mercy. Those tears, like drops of rain, fall upon the stones. And upon these stones their most burning prayers are like imperceptible breaths of wind. Not a single grain of sand trembles upon the wall, not a single stain changes its form. There is not visible the slightest sign that their weeping is heard. I see how their souls struggle upward and are, as it were, mowed down with the sentence of death; they are converted into

dust which the wind carries off, together with the dust of the earth.

He turns to the people.

I will gather up your wingless prayers. I will purify them and heal them and will take them with me to Heaven and redeem your erring souls, which are being turned into dust. And together with myself I will take them into the kingdom of perfection. I will snap the bonds with which your guiltless hands are bound. I will take from your innocent heads the curse with which you are cursed, and I will inspire a living spirit in your prayers in order that they may rise upward. Into your souls I will breathe life, and that which is unclean and sullied I will remove from your garments. I will clothe you with splendor and with magnificence. I will give you of my spirit and of my words and you shall become the children of God, for in truth ye are God's children.

I feel it: the year is coming, the day is drawing nigh, fore-ordained by my God for the resurrection of my spirit, when He will give unto me His word, His power. On that

day He will proclaim to me through His prophet the beginning of my kingdom. I feel it: the moment is drawing nigh. I shall speak my word—and the generations of the dead from the beginning of the world until the last day shall rise on their feet and shall bow to me. I shall breathe my message into them and they shall revive. And I shall deliver you from this world which has its beginning and its end, and I shall lead you into an eternal world which has no end. And through me your spiritual powers shall receive liberty. And ye shall understand God. And human character—earthly, locked up in narrow confines of beginning and end—through me shall arise to heavenly and eternal confines, and your souls through me will rise up to life in the eternal radiance of Heaven and God.

Await me. The time draws near. I feel that my kingdom is beginning. I await only the word and the power of God.

He disappears with his disciples behind the mountain. The people for some time remain motionless and gaze after his slowly retreating silhouette.

FIRST OLD MAN

Who is this?

SECOND OLD MAN

It is not known who he is nor whence he has come. For some time he has been seen, now here, now there: and he speaks of the Messiah who must soon come, in the year five thousand four hundred and eight, by the decree of God.

THIRD OLD MAN

He is seen only among the tombs of holy men, in caves, in ruins; everywhere he laments with his disciples, and prays and fasts, and grieves, and bathes in the Jordan, and climbs upon the Mount of Olives, and he always looks thither, to the heights of Gilead.

SECOND OLD MAN

Who knows, perchance deliverance is in very truth near at hand. Perchance God has taken pity on His people. (*Groans*) In Poland, they say, the birth pangs of the Messiah have begun.

FIRST OLD MAN

As yet, here we have had no sign. Not a single prophet has appeared as yet. We know only that which our wise men have bade us do. Today is the anniversary of the destruction of the Temple. Let us read further the Lamentations of Jeremiah.

The people take up their prayer books once more. It slowly grows dark. One after another lights candles.

SECOND OLD MAN

(*Reads*) "Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities."

THE PEOPLE

(*After him*) "Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities."

ACT I

SCENE I

Among the Royal Tombs in Jerusalem

A broad, spacious court, paved with stone, surrounded with high old walls, from which trees grow; on the walls black and white spots are seen; from them comes a breath of ancient times. On the left there is a broad stairway leading to the street. On both sides of the stairway are black openings bordering on the wall; they are the "mikvot," ritualistic cisterns for rainwater. In this place they used to bathe corpses before burial. In the rear of the stage are the half-ruined columns of a terrace that is still preserved, though half in ruins. A round fragment of rock is walled into the entrance of a cavern opening on the court. It is growing dark. Twilight.

Four tall fir trees grow above the cavern. On two fallen columns near the opening of the

cavern sit RACHEL *and* LEAH, *the two former wives of* SABBATAI ZEVI. *The gray twilight prevents the women from seeing each other.*

VOICE OF SABBATAI ZEVI

(*His voice is borne from out the cavern*)

To the hill I am ascending
To the vale I am descending
I shall meet Melliselda,
Daughter of the King.

She comes from the bath.
Her hair is still wet,
Her face is as the gleam of a knife,
Her eyes are like darts,
Like coral her lips,
Her body like milk.

LEAH

(*As if speaking to herself*) He sings of the black queen with the black crown upon her head. It was she who took me from my bed on the wedding night.

RACHEL

(*As if speaking to herself*) When he bathes him in the sea or climbs upon the mountains it seems as if I myself were in the sea or upon the mountains. Unnoticed was I when I passed him by.

LEAH

(*Observing her*) Who art thou, my little sister?

RACHEL

I come from the East; from the city of Izmir.[1] I was fourteen years old when I was given to him in marriage. My mother bathed my body with the milk of goats. With costly oil I bathed my eyes, but he did not look upon me; he saw me not. He bathed himself in the sea; he went up into the mountains. Why didst thou not see my dark eyes? Why didst thou not notice my body? For thou didst stand with me under the canopy; for thou didst cover my hair with the wedding veil.

[1] Smyrna.

LEAH

Come to me, my little sister. Lay thy head upon my knees!

RACHEL

Who art thou? I fear thee.

LEAH

Fear me not. Like thee I stood under the canopy with him and shared his couch. From the same cup we drank wine. I became his wife only by the wedding ceremony, but I knew not his love.

RACHEL

His body was fragrant, like aromatic oil, like the apple of paradise which the father procures on the day of the Feast of Tabernacles. I perceived fragrance emanating from his hands. God did not bless me. I was unworthy of him.

LEAH

Alone at night I heard only his prayers, only the chanting of hymns.

RACHEL

Thou also wast his wife? Who art thou to have been worthy of it?

LEAH

My father is Samuel Tirudi from the city of Salonika. Our family came out of Portugal. With the Arabs we went into Spain. Our riches are not in money, nor in estates of land, but in scriptures, written on parchment, which have become absorbed into our blood, instilled into our very flesh.—This little scroll is the evidence of our origin, and on it are the names, generation after generation, straight back to the shepherd-king; with the blood of David flowing in our veins, we, the family of Tirudi, wander about; princes of the blood, we wander from land to land, from stream to stream. Behold these walls! (*She points to the wall*) On them is written the majesty of our origin. Dost thou see those spots, black and white? There did our heroes, hanging up their breast-plates and their sufferings, cover the royal tombs with prayer shawls. I brought the blood of David to him

as my dowry. From the tree of David I thought to bear him children, but he spurned me, he put me away.

RACHEL

(*Reclining on* LEAH'S *knees*) I come not from the tribe of David; nevertheless, I am a child of the king, a Jewish maiden. I did not bring him the blood of David as my dowry, nor gold, nor castles, but my youth. I laid my blood, my life, at his feet; but he spurned me, he put me away.

LEAH

We are unworthy of him.

RACHEL

But why are we unworthy?

LEAH

I know not, my dear sister, whether thou wilt understand me. His soul is great and each night it soars to Heaven. God has poured out upon him His blessing and sent him to us as a savior. Our souls must needs

be pure in order that they may soar on high, together with his soul. They are too burdened with sin.

RACHEL

At night I heard naught but his praying and singing. His face was turned to the wall, and he seemed to speak softly and lovingly with some one. I did not behold a man—about his face there was a halo and it shone like the sun, and his eyes were radiant.

LEAH

That was when he spoke with God.

RACHEL

I fell at his feet and covered them with my hair, but he carefully put me away, and went from the room.

LEAH

Did he not speak with thee at all?

RACHEL

He only looked into my eyes and said: "Thou art not she." And he went away. I

followed after him. He went far away into the mountains and, silent and alone, dissolving into the gray fogs and night dews, he vanished from my sight.

LEAH

And didst thou not see him again?

RACHEL

My father constrained him, and we were separated. On Sabbaths and on New Year's Day he would announce in the synagogues that the world was already exalted, God and man already reconciled. I do not know what he meant by that. He proclaimed the name of God as if he were a high priest at the judgment day in the Temple, but they drove him from the city.

LEAH

He came to us in the city of Salonika; at night he, with his seven hundred disciples, stationed themselves in the market place. In his white raiment he was like a young high

priest and he spoke of God and of man, and he knocked upon all the doors, and tore open all the shutters, and called young and old into the streets; and he aroused them, and preached, and said that God had chosen him for the redemption of man and of the world—to prepare a pathway for exaltation. The day is drawing near. The year five thousand four hundred and eight is beginning and the first day of that year is appointed by God for the freeing from chains of that Messiah whom God bound on the day of his birth, on the day of the destruction of the holy Temple. They lit torches, they illuminated the square with lamps, and loud and powerful were their prayers as they called upon God.

RACHEL

How did he look?

LEAH

Like a high priest in his white raiment. And I fell at his feet, I, a scion of the House of David; and he led me beneath the canopy, but he did not make me his wife.

RACHEL

Did that make thee sad, dear sister?

LEAH

They laid me to sleep in his bed in wedding garments. My mother whispered in my ear: "Sanctify thy body: sanctify thy soul, dear little daughter." The wick was burning out in the lamp, music played. At the door there appeared a queen, black as night, wearing a crown, all in gold, in a black veil, with a star on her forehead; she carried me from the bed, the flame in the lamp flickered, music played behind the door.

RACHEL

My poor sister, poor sister!

LEAH

He went from the house of my father, saying: "What have I to do with thee, what hast thou to do with me? Thou art not she! She who was appointed by God will come to me. My soul and hers are own sisters,

illuminated by the same light, and blessed by God."

The voice of SABBATAI ZEVI *is heard from the cavern.*

VOICE

Where shall I seek my bride?
I seek her at sunrise,
I seek her at sunset,
And night and day
One question is on my lips:
Is it not yet time to erect the canopy,
Is it not yet time to weave the wedding veil,
Is it not yet time to prepare the broad couch,
So that all may be ready for the wedding?

LEAH

It is he—singing of her, always of her. I see a gray-haired man, unshod, in a prayer shawl. Like a white phantom he comes to the door. Who is he?

NEHEMIAH COHEN *comes to the door with unshod feet, in a prayer shawl. He has a horn under his arm and a vessel of oil in his hand.*

NEHEMIAH COHEN

Sabbatai, my son, where art thou?

RACHEL

Sister dear, I am frightened.

LEAH

Come, let us hide behind the wall. He is calling upon God.

LEAH *and* RACHEL *disappear.*

NEHEMIAH COHEN

Sabbatai, my son, Sabbatai, where art thou?

The voice of SABBATAI *is heard from the cavern.*

VOICE

I am here. Who is calling me?

NEHEMIAH COHEN

(*Calls into the cavern*) I am calling; I, the messenger of God. God speaks thus: "Sabbatai, my son, why dost thou hide thyself in holes and caverns? Shake the dust from off

thy garments. Cast the chains from thy hands and build up that which it is given thee to build, and destroy that which it is given thee to destroy!"

VOICE OF SABBATAI ZEVI

I hear the voice of God, which penetrates through barriers into my cavern. It is calling me and I am ready. (*He appears out of the cavern dressed in white, surrounded by his disciples: they are in black with candles in their hands*) Speak, I am ready.

NEHEMIAH COHEN

The voice of God came to me thus: "A son is born to Mordecai in the city of Izmir in the East, near the sea. And I have called him Sabbatai Zevi. And he shall subdue the monsters that live in the rivers of Egypt. And he shall destroy the writhing dragon. Not with iron nor with steel shall he lead hosts to war, but with My word, which is in him, and with My glory, which shines upon him." And again the voice of God came to me after the rising of the sun: "Take in

thy hands a vessel of oil and take a horn with thee and go unto Sabbatai, unto My son, and anoint him as a father and as an elder over My people of Israel and as the shepherd of My holy city, for I have repented and have seen their sufferings and shame, and I have remembered that they are called by My name." And I said: "God of my fathers, whither shall I go and where shall I find Thy chosen one?" And the word of God came to me: "Go to the land of Judea, to the city of Jerusalem, unto the burial places of the kings, on the western side of the city, and stand by the cavern but do not enter it, and there thou shalt meet his wives who persistently follow him. And I have proclaimed thus: 'Sabbatai, My son; Sabbatai, My son! My radiance is upon thee: go forth and glorify My name, for the time has come for thee to raise up the canopy.' " And behold I have called unto thee and thou hast appeared on the threshold of the cavern. And now may the glory of the name of God be manifest, which spoke the truth through His servant—that I may meet thee now.

SABBATAI ZEVI

I have waited long for the word of the Lord. Glory to Him who has chosen me as the guardian of His people! May His radiance and glory be upon me! May He be with me for ever and ever, for the sake of the House of my father David, in order that that may be fulfilled which He spoke unto my fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! And now His message is fulfilled, for God and man await deliverance!

NEHEMIAH COHEN

(*Takes vessel of oil and pours it on his head*) Today I have anointed thee in the name of the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, as King and Messiah over His chosen people Israel, and I have placed the word of God on thy lips and the sword of God in thy hands; and His power is with thee, and His word is with thee. (*He blows the horn*) Hail to the King, the Messiah! Hail to the King, the Messiah!



Sabbatai Zevi Anointed

DISCIPLES

Hail to the King, the Messiah! Hail to the King, the Messiah!

SABBATAI ZEVI

I am chosen by God. In me His word lives; in me is His power. I deliver all men from the yoke of bondage. And the fallen earth I exalt to heaven; I cleanse and heal the defiled peoples. I make perfect the imperfect, and I deliver souls from captivity, and I sanctify them and exalt them. May evil perish and good prevail! Thus have I commanded, and thus let it be!

DISCIPLES

Rabbi, we see the light! Rabbi, we see the light!

ABRAHAM YAKHINI

(*One of his disciples, prophesies*) I see that the world is set free. It comes forth from the caverns and is exalted. The heavens are opened. The souls of whole generations, wandering and forsaken, are delivered. They

stand by the throne of glory, they return to their divine source. I see prayers which have languished for years. Now they are cleansed and purified, and are woven into crowns for the Godhead. Heaven again receives their light. The earth is renewed. God and man are set free. So God has decreed! So God has decreed!

SABBATAI ZEVI

I pour upon you my spirit and I impart unto you a portion of my holiness, and I give to you the gift of prophecy. And ye shall carry my word and my commandment to all the ends of the wide world. To the oppressed people of Israel bring the good tidings that the hour of its splendor and magnificence is at hand. And I shall gather them up from all the ends of the earth and shall lead them into the land which God hath promised to my fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And I myself shall reign over them.

DISCIPLES

Rabbi, we see the light; we see the light!

SABBATAI ZEVI

Abraham Yakhini, son of Isaac, son of Aaron!

ABRAHAM YAKHINI *approaches him.*

SABBATAI ZEVI

In thee I behold the soul of the prophet Nathan, who prophesied before my father David; and I will make thee the father of my prophets. And always thou must be with me. Through thee shall I inquire concerning the roads that I must travel.

ABRAHAM YAKHINI

(*Bowing*) The King, the Messiah, has spoken: so be it. Long live the everlasting King!

SABBATAI ZEVI

Let there stand before me Samuel Primo, the son of David, the son of Zorah.

SAMUEL PRIMO

(*Approaching*) Speak, King and Messiah. Thy servant heareth.

SABBATAI ZEVI

I behold in thee the soul of Jehoshaphat, the son of Ahilud, who was a follower of my forefather, David. Thou shalt be my follower, always with me, so that I may announce through thee the paths in which they must go.

SAMUEL PRIMO

(*Bowing*) The King, the Messiah, has commanded: so be it. May God ever abide with thee!

SABBATAI ZEVI

Take a pen in thy hand, and take a tablet and engrave on it what I shall say.

SAMUEL PRIMO *goes into the cavern and brings out a tablet and a goose quill; he seats himself on a fallen column. Two disciples hold candles before him.*

SABBATAI ZEVI

(*Dictating to him*) "On the first day of the resurrection into light and spirit, that is, on the twenty-second day of the month of

Tammuz, the lion month, we went out of Izmir and stopped at Salonika. We went out of Salonika and came to rest in Jerusalem in the burial places of the kings. From David, son of Jesse, exalted over the kings of this world, enthroned in the blessedness and glory of the Messiah of the God of Jacob, Sabbatai Zevi, to his chosen people of Israel, who are scattered throughout all the ends of the earth, through all countries, whereunto his law and commandment reach.

"The light has come unto you and your sun has shone forth. I, your commander and king, chosen by God, anointed Messiah by the God of Jacob, have come to you. I have taken pity upon you. I shall array myself in the garments of vengeance in order to avenge you. I shall succor you as a mother succors her children, and I shall gather you up from all the places wherein ye are scattered, and I shall lead you unto the happy land of Canaan, which God promised to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Believe in me and place your hope in me—the time will soon come when I shall manifest my power

and my strong right arm to the peoples of the whole earth. For He will not lie, the staff of Jacob; and the defender of Israel will not betray.

"And a life not of this world will begin. Pray, and in your prayers bless my kingdom. And in your prayers ye shall speak thus: 'Glory to our sovereign, glory to our defender, the Messiah of the God of Jacob. May his beauty be exalted. May his kingdom be exalted. His heart doth beat in glory. Let his throne be established today and forevermore.'

"From me, David, the son of Jesse, exalted above the kings of the world, enthroned in the blessedness and glory of the Messiah of the God of Jacob, Sabbatai Zevi."

SAMUEL PRIMO *stops writing.*

SABBATAI ZEVI

(*To* SAMUEL PRIMO) Take this letter and place upon it my seal, "the serpent," for I shall take vengeance in their behalf, like a serpent.

(*He presses the seal.*

SABBATAI ZEVI

(*To* ABRAHAM YAKHINI) Sign it also.

ABRAHAM YAKHINI

(*Writes*) "I, Abraham Yakhini, the slave of my sovereign, appointed by the King and Messiah as the prophet Nathan, in the year 'redemption has come.' "[1]

SABBATAI ZEVI

(*Gives the letter to his disciples*) Carry my word unto the uttermost parts of the earth and extend my glory and splendor and preach the good tidings everywhere.

My spirit is with you. I give unto you of my strength, to root out and demolish, to ruin and make desolate, to build up and establish. Announce that until my coming to them, I shall suffer for them, in order to exalt their souls, and in order to fulfil the words of the prophet: "And a king is bound in chains." I shall give myself up to be bound

[1] The sum of the numerical values of the cipher is the same as the sum of the numerical value of the letters in the name SABBATAI ZEVI.

in chains that your hearts may not be weak, and may not be made feeble. As a lion from his lair so shall I come forth, and as a leopard so shall I be strong. I shall bring the vengeance of God for myself and for them.

MATTATHIAS BLOCH *and* MORDECAI HASID *take the letter.*

MATTATHIAS BLOCH

We shall carry thy word and thy commandment unto the peoples and the nations of the world in order that they may know thy splendor and thy magnificence and that they may serve thee, the King, the Messiah, and the Teacher.

SABBATAI ZEVI

Go, my spirit is with you.

MATTATHIAS BLOCH *and* MORDECAI HASID *go out, walking backward.*

SABBATAI ZEVI

Abraham, my prophet; Samuel, my follower, be always near me: let us go to the Hebrews. Let us go to exalt souls.

(*He starts to go out with his disciples*).

LEAH *and* RACHEL *come out from behind the wall; they throw themselves at the feet of* SABBATAI ZEVI *and kiss the hem of his garment.*

LEAH *and* RACHEL

King and husband, give us of thy holiness.

SABBATAI ZEVI

(*To* SAMUEL PRIMO) Who are they?

SAMUEL PRIMO

These are thy former wives. They follow after thee even as shadows and kiss thy footsteps, King and Messiah.

SABBATAI ZEVI

What do they wish?

SAMUEL PRIMO

They wish to be worthy of thee.

SABBATAI ZEVI

I behold in them the souls of the daughters of Zelophehad. Therefore they also shall be

numbered with the chosen. (*To* ABRAHAM YAKHINI) Raise them up, for they were found worthy to kiss the hem of my garment; and make them bondservants of her who shall come after them and who is better than they.

He goes out slowly with his suite; LEAH *and* RACHEL *follow them.*

SCENE II

A graveyard in a small Polish town. The clouds are rolling in. At times they pile up like crags on the horizon and again they disappear. In the background the high white walls of a monastery are outlined like pale phantoms of the night. From behind the gravestones, showing white in the darkness, are visible groups of Jews in hiding. Their white garments, on which fall the moonbeams or the pale gleam of a lantern, betray them. At times the people gather in groups and whisper.

On the distant horizon is seen the faint glow of a burning town.

While the monastery windows are illuminated and chanting is heard, there is no movement in the graveyard. But soon the monastery windows grow dark, the singing ceases. One after another figures in long white garments become defined. Black shadows lie on the white gravestones. The silhouettes grow more numerous. Groups appear.

FIRST FIGURE

Look, look! What is that? (*His hand points to the fading glow*) The fire is waning in our city. It seems that our enemies are leaving. With the help of God, perhaps we shall escape.

SECOND FIGURE

It is impossible to be certain of that. The Cossacks are embittered against us. They say that Chmielnicki, their chief, has given orders that not one Jew shall be left alive.

A HOLY MAN

We must recite our confession and prepare for death.

SECOND FIGURE

For death we are all prepared. Behold, these are shrouds upon us. And the ceremony of cleansing is completed. We are all prepared.

HOLY MAN

I do not think so. Perhaps a great trial awaits us. (*Indicating the monastery with his hand*) Behold! That—or death! Sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—be ye ready!

VOICES FROM THE CROWD

We are ready, we are ready, Heavenly Father!

The voices die away. The people bow their heads as if, in silent communion, in the face of the possibility of death, each one were examining his own spiritual life. There is a long silence. At the back of the stage there suddenly appears a swarm of slowly receding torches.

FIRST FIGURE

(*With a suppressed cry of joy*) Look, the Cossacks are leaving! Look!

THE CROWD

(*Quickly turning around as if to assure themselves*) Thank God!

SECOND FIGURE

(*Interrupting*) Quiet! Hide yourselves; they may see our white robes.

Some of the crowd conceal themselves behind the gravestones; others fall upon the earth. Detached, suppressed voices are heard.

VOICES

Praise to Thee, O God! Hallowed be Thy name!

The silence lasts one second, then another, until the torches disappear into the night. The people rise up and assemble from all corners, breaking up into groups.

SEVERAL PERSONS

Praise to Him whose name is blessed; the danger has passed.

HOLY MAN

Nevertheless it is well to be ready for anything; it is uncertain what may happen.

The crowd is again silent for a moment.

SEVERAL PERSONS

What shall we do now?

HOLY MAN

Return thanks to God for His mercy.

A YOUNG MAN

They have destroyed the roofs over our heads; they have laid waste our buildings; without clothing and without shelter we wander about the fields.

HOLY MAN

All because of our sins, because of our sins!

YOUNG MAN

They have dishonored our wives before our eyes; they have crushed our children; they have yoked our youths with their horses.

HOLY MAN

But it was because of our sins—because of—

YOUNG MAN

We are become a reproach and a mocking in the eyes of strangers; three days and three nights we have fasted in His name and there was no answer nor any sound. He has turned His face from us. Defenseless, we are delivered into strangers' hands, as if, God forbid! we had bowed our knees before a tree; as if we had offered up prayers to a stone. We stand alone on the earth!

HOLY MAN

(*To those around him*) Within ourselves is the sin: that cannot be gainsaid. Women do not die in childbirth without cause. Verily sin has been committed by the whole community. A woman flaunts her hair, she is ill—but she receives the caresses of her husband, and is that not sin? Some are not very careful about milk and meat. Do many disturb themselves if the 'erub[1] is violated?

[1] Law concerning carrying on the Sabbath.

Do all put on the phylacteries in the morning? Do all read the Shema' in the evening? Do all gaze attentively on the mezuzahs[1] on their lintels? In the baking of bread is our ancient ceremony preserved? Who knows? Let us take in our hands the trumpets. Let us light black candles in the synagogues. Let us proclaim a Herem[2] and let us denounce the offenders. The time of trial has come for the Jews.

YOUNG MAN

We await justice from Heaven; our looks are turned toward the East. We lie with our heads toward the East in the grave; our faces look to the place where go our prayers. But from thence comes no sign of care for us. Our way is not made plain to us; hearing never a word, whole generations pass away. Our prophets have died; the holy Ark of the Covenant is taken from us. In solitude we remain on earth, speechless and powerless.

[1] Scrolls with the Confession of the Unity enclosed in box.

[2] Anathema.

HOLY MAN

Say not so. Thy tongue—may God forbid! —will lead to sin. Our time boasts of great rabbis if not prophets.

YOUNG MAN

They think up commentaries on dead letters, on dead letters written by the hands of dead men. To the living *today* they bind the dead *yesterday*. Not a single word is given them by the strength of revelation. Not a single sign, not a single hint. Are we not rummaging in the dust of whole generations? And for whole centuries we have lived an exiled people, contenting ourselves with commentaries on the words of a distant past. Why is the word of revelation silent for us? In truth, are we not as faithful to Him as our fathers were in times long past? Verily, have we not preferred to put our heads under the knife rather than bow them before the cross? Have not our daughters thrown themselves into the river, that their bodies might not be defiled by the uncircumcised? Did we not go into the furnace with His name on our lips,

loudly glorifying Him? Why is He silent on high? Why does He conceal Himself in silence behind the clouds? With His name deeply engraved on our hearts we are hiding here amid carrion, as if the ears to which we call were deaf, and as if our outstretched hands were powerless, as a reproach and a mocking to the generation that is being born.

HOLY MAN

Do not approach within four cubits of him! Do not touch his clothing! Close your ears and hear him not! Woe unto us! He reviles the name of God.

There is a movement in the crowd.

PART OF THE CROWD

Leave him alone! Leave him alone! It is the spirit of affliction speaking in him, a heart overflowing with blood.

FIRST CABALIST

Woe unto them! They grieve only for the sufferings of the body. Lord, hallowed be Thy name! He is in banishment, even as we

are. He, even as ourselves, is under the shadow of the holy Ark and sobs with us and suffers with us. And together with us he hides among the tombs and waits for us, waits till we shall rise a single step higher. Jews, be holy! The hour draws nigh, the time of redemption is coming on, as it is written in the holy Zohar.[1] Who knows?—perhaps these are the torments that must precede the appearance of the Messiah.

The crowd presses closely about the CABALIST.

SECOND CABALIST

A Jew from a distant place has presented himself before us. He is dressed in white. In his hand he has a clod of earth from Palestine, and he says that somewhere over there beyond the sea there is a land, and therein live the ten tribes of Israel; the holy language is their language, and the Sabbath day is their day. The way to that land lies across the river Sambation; but six days in the week an evil spirit throws stones and

[1] A cabalistic book, in the form of a commentary on the Pentateuch.

crossing is impossible. On the seventh day, when the Jews must rest, the river also rests. —He also says that somewhere on the sea ships sail, and their sails are of silk, their flags are of silk, and the names of the ten tribes are emblazoned on the sails. The sailors on the ships speak in the holy tongue. The ships sail toward the East, their flags wave toward the East.—Over Jerusalem a star, the size of a man's face, has risen, and its light is as the sun. Out of the caverns burst forth voices. They announce that the Messiah has appeared somewhere.

THIRD CABALIST

He came also to us and spoke.—It is not known whence he came nor whither he has gone.

ONE OF THE CROWD

(*Suddenly seeing* NEHEMIAH COHEN *standing on a mound*) Who is he that stands by the tree in a shroud? Is he from our community?

The crowd looks at NEHEMIAH COHEN.

ONE

I do not know him.

ANOTHER

Nor I.

A THIRD

I noticed him long ago. He stands there all the time and prays.

A FOURTH

I passed by him and heard how he kept repeating a single prayer: "Ruler of the World, sanctify Thy name throughout all creation."

ANOTHER

His face cannot be seen; it is wrapped in a prayer shawl.

SECOND CABALIST

I will go up to him.

SEVERAL IN THE CROWD

Do not go.

SECOND CABALIST

(*Approaching* NEHEMIAH COHEN) *Shalom 'alekem:* peace be with thee!

NEHEMIAH *does not reply.*

SECOND CABALIST

Who art thou? One of us or a stranger? We require thee to tell us who thou art.

NEHEMIAH

Who is it that hinders my meditation?

SECOND CABALIST

Rabbi, we are enduring great affliction.

NEHEMIAH

Verily, do ye not feel the nearness of God—the spirit of mercy, which hovers above you? He gathered up your prayers, washed off their stains, cleansed them from evil thoughts, and in his hands carried them to the gates of mercy. He ascended nine steps; on the tenth he met an angel. Who is it that hinders my meditation?

SECOND CABALIST

Master, we are enduring great affliction.

NEHEMIAH

And your souls, not attaining to perfection, wander amid the tombs; they cannot rise to the high judgment seat. And your imperfect prayers stray about until evil spirits seize upon them, and the chains fettering the Messiah grow still more heavy.

VOICES IN THE CROWD

Woe unto us!

ANOTHER CABALIST

I have recognized him. It is that same Jew. He was among us. He spoke of the Messiah.

SEVERAL

He brings us news from afar.

NEHEMIAH

(*As if arousing himself*) Rejoice, Jews; rejoice! The presence of God, the Shekinah, is

arrayed in holiday garments. With a crown on her head she awaits her beloved. He will come to her in radiance and light. Heaven and earth greet them with hymns of welcome. Whole worlds are being freed from fetters; they tear themselves loose from bonds, and rise higher and higher. Erring souls find rest. Wandering prayers find their way to the throne of glory, and the heavens are exalted higher and the earth is exalted; fetters are loosed. Everything is set free. Do ye hear singing? That is perfection, primeval perfection, established at the creation of the world, singing its triumphal hymn.

THE CROWD

(*Is silent, seized with terror. One speaks to another*) He proclaims something; I know not what he means.

A YOUNG MAN

(*He has been sitting all this time behind a tombstone, listening attentively; now he rises swiftly*) I hear some words. I know, I know whereof he speaks.

FIRST CABALIST

(*To* NEHEMIAH) Rabbi, we are enduring great affliction.

NEHEMIAH

(*Coming down from the mound and mixing with the crowd*) Jews, prepare for the appointed hour. It is at hand. The time draws nigh. I hear: the chains of the Messiah are breaking. The world awaits. Heaven awaits. The earth awaits. All is expectation. He is here in our midst. Behind the door, behind our door, He is waiting that they may have power to rise higher to Him, and to conquer evil, that the world may attain the fulness of perfection, that God and the Shekinah may melt into one.

PART OF THE CROWD

Rabbi, what shall we do?

NEHEMIAH

Cleanse your souls from stains. Let there be neither stains nor scars. Purify your prayers and make you ready, every one. Arise to one thought, to one great, great

exaltation of spirit. (*Softly*) He is here in our midst. He awaits us. (*Prophesying*) The nearer the hour of redemption approaches, the stronger does Satan become. Conquer evil . . . A trial awaits us . . . Jews, be prepared. A trial awaits us.

Suddenly the noise of a movement in the grass near the tombstones becomes audible. Then the joyful voice of a maiden.

VOICE OF SARAH

My mother washed my raven locks,
And decked me for the wedding wreath;
Messiah's bride I have become,
On judgment day we wed.

The crowd, seized with terror, hearkens to the voice of SARAH. NEHEMIAH *vanishes.*

FIRST

I heard a voice amid the gravestones.

ANOTHER

Someone is hiding there.
The crowd waits in terror.

SARAH

(*She runs from the side of the monastery in a night shift and a quickly-donned garment. Her hair is disheveled. She laughs wildly*) My body is covered with bruises. Pieces of flesh are torn from my hands, but I am saved from the monastery. My dead father dragged me forth. At night he came and took me from the monastery.

FIRST CABALIST

Whence hast thou come?

SARAH

I fled from the monastery. They captured me in war time; they gave me terefah[1] to eat; they gave me the cross to kiss. But I am the bride of the Messiah; how, then, can I eat terefah? How can I kiss a strange God? They tied my hands; they beat me with the scourge. I firmly bit my lips; I covered my eyes with my hair, so that I should not eat terefah; should not look upon the strange God.

[1] Food forbidden by the Jewish ritual.

FIRST CABALIST

Who brought thee hither?

SARAH

At night my dead father came. He bit my hands; he tore me forth from the monastery. The Messiah, they say, has already come, there—to them! (*She points to the monastery*) He has forgiven all sins and we are already saved. He has come to them. To us also—but they say that we thrust him forth and therefore have remained on the street. The Messiah has already come, and they praise his name in all the four ends of the earth; they bear his words across the sea to wild peoples, through the forests, over the fields, and they kiss the feet of his image; they caress the dust of his clothing; they drink of his blood; they eat of his body. The Messiah has already come, and they tied my hands; they made me go on my knees before him, and pray to him, and bow my forehead to the floor before him. (*With inspiration*) Bite my hands, burn out my eyes, pierce me with needles; I will not bow to him; I will not pray

to him! To you, the Messiah has not come! To us, he is coming, to us! He is coming from the East! Him will I serve; his dust will I kiss; I will burn candles for him; I will sing his praise; I will weave curtains for him. His feet will I kiss and I will wipe them with my hair.

(*She droops her head and—all in ecstasy—is silent for some time. The crowd is terror-stricken.*

ONE OF THE CROWD

Which of you knows her? Who is she?

ANOTHER

None of us knows her. To no one is it known who she is.

FIRST CABALIST

Be silent! Hearken to her words!

SARAH

(*Lying on the ground, murmurs in a low tone, her eyes fixed on the distance, as if on a strange land*) From the East a light shines upon me. I see a city that lies by the sea.

High into the light beyond the clouds mountains rise, and all about is bathed in that light. Into the dark night, all muffled in gray, he rises on high and bathes his body and bathes his soul in the light beyond the clouds.—Mother, array me in wedding garments, braid my hair . . . I have seen my bridegroom. He is the chosen of God. Hear ye! They sound the trumpets near and far! I have chosen him, I have chosen him. His name is Sabbatai. The city is called Izmir.

FIRST CABALIST

She is prophesying.

YOUNG MAN

(*Falling on the ground and lifting his hands to Heaven*) Thou hast been silent for many generations; long, long have we wearily endured life, and Thou wast silent. Now Thou sendest once more to us the word; now Thou dost appear to us. Glory to Thee, glory!

SARAH

I see a land. Mountains and valleys are

before me, as it were, on the palm of my hand. Each grain of sand is as if God had kissed it, as if bathed by the light of His glory. Each of the worlds has its own star, shining brightly above it. Each soul has its own light above it. . . . .

. . . .

I see that land. Its fields are not green, but white, even as swans' wings in the sunlight.

Heaven and earth are joined in union . . . God and man are joined in union. I behold him ascending his mountain. Like grain swayed by the wind, like thirsty fields to the clouds, the earth and the whole world stretch themselves out to his mountain and they hearken to his word and see his light. From slavery he releases; he sets the people free. Messiah is his name. That city is called Zion.

VOICE IN THE CROWD

Messiah is his name. That city is called Zion.

Here and there groups are formed and in them the people, with burning eyes, speaking in a whisper as if half asleep, point to SARAH.

FIRST CABALIST

(*From one of the groups*) From the East he is coming to us, majestic and radiant. Over lands and lands he will carry us far away, home to our own mother.

SECOND CABALIST

(*From another group*) Ships sail over the seas. Along roads and footpaths, from all countries, from all peoples, bathed in light, magnified by holiness, people go to the tabernacle of the Lord.

VOICE IN THE CROWD

Messiah is his name. That city is called Zion.

ONE

He is here; he is here in our midst.

ANOTHER

Does any one see him?

A THIRD

Take staffs in your hands and packs on

your shoulders; gather together the women and children and let us go, let us go!

STILL ANOTHER

Whither, whither?

STILL ANOTHER

Thither, thither!

VOICE IN THE CROWD

Messiah is his name. That city is called Zion.

The flush of dawn appears. All is bathed with the morning light, and in the light MATTATHIAS BLOCH *and* MORDECAI HASID *are distinguished; both go up on the knoll with bundles on their backs and staffs in their hands, turning toward the people.*

MATTATHIAS BLOCH *and* MORDECAI HASID

We have come to you from David, the son of Jesse, mightiest among the kings of the earth; his throne is blessing and glory. The anointed of the God of Jacob, Sabbatai Zevi, to his chosen people of Israel.

The people eagerly attend to the words of Mattathias *and* Mordecai. *Their faces shine in the morning rays, reflecting terror and hope.* Sarah *suddenly springs up.*

Sarah

Array me in my wedding gown, O my mother,
And braid my raven tresses.
I have become Messiah's bride,
On Judgment day we wed.



Sabbatai Zevi on His Throne

ACT II

SCENE III

In Cairo at the house of SARRAF-BASHI JOSEPH RAPHAEL. *The hall is in strictly Oriental style. The walls are hung with rich silk rugs, into which are woven scenes from Ruth and the Song of Songs. In the place of honor is a throne, the steps of which are decorated with lions on the right and left. In the center of the hall, there is a costly silk canopy on four gold standards. Around the canopy are prophets and prophetesses with* ABRAHAM YAKHINI *and* SAMUEL PRIMO *at the head. A "Sabbath" man-servant and maid-servant (not Jewish) hold scissors in their hands to snuff the candles.*

SAMUEL PRIMO, BASHI JOSEPH RAPHAEL

SAMUEL PRIMO

(*To* BASHI JOSEPH RAPHAEL) Verily, thou

art fortunate, our leader, that thou hast been thought worthy to receive under thy roof the King and Messiah, who is celebrating his wedding with his chosen bride, the daughter of God, the Torah.

BASHI JOSEPH RAPHAEL

I thank and glorify His name for the honor that has fallen upon me. The Sultan has made me the director of his finances, he has loaded me with benefits. But can that be compared to the honor which the King and Messiah shows me in my house, leading his bride beneath the canopy?

SAMUEL PRIMO

He will make thy sons kings, and as kings they will pour water on his hands. Thy daughters and his two former wives, who were thought worthy to touch his garments, he will make the attendants of his bride, the Torah.

BASHI JOSEPH RAPHAEL

I have opened my treasures to him, my money, my palace; they are his. Send

messengers about wherever the Jews are scattered; proclaim the joyful news of the glory of God, manifesting itself to us.

SAMUEL PRIMO

We have sent messengers, we have sent letters about; and know, our leader, that here and everywhere whereunto his word has been carried, a new sun has shone forth. We have waited for him as for a deliverance from woes. His spirit is upon us, and there—dost thou see? (*he points to the prophets*)—young and old are prophesying the coming of his kingdom.

BASHI JOSEPH RAPHAEL

Glory to the name of God forever!

SAMUEL PRIMO

(*Pointing to the Sabbath servants*) Behold, even on the tribes that are not sprung from the Hebrews he also hath poured his spirit, that the Gentiles may know his power and magnificence, that his name may become the possession of all that live under the heavens. (*To the* PROPHETS) O ye holy children of the

prophets, point out the way along which we must go, point out the light toward which we must strive.

THE PROPHETS

(*Sing*) He is our sovereign, our king, our salvation, Sabbatai Zevi, the King and Messiah.

BASHI JOSEPH RAPHAEL

Glory to God for ever and ever, who doth not diminish His mercies toward us, doth not doom us to ruin among the nations. (*Changing his tone*) Only where is he, our King and Messiah, for everything is ready for the wedding?

SAMUEL PRIMO

He is here somewhere unseen, in holy communion with God, his Father.

ABRAHAM YAKHINI

(*Suddenly turning around toward the door through which* SABBATAI ZEVI *will come out*) God speaks thus:

"Hasten, thou king among men,
All is ready for the wedding,
Make firm the standards for the canopy,
Prepare thy bed."

A hush falls on the crowd. The PROPHETS *and* PROPHETESSES *arrange themselves in two rows.*

ABRAHAM YAKHINI

Sound the trumpets. Let your voices be borne afar. The chosen of God is coming; he is our ruler, he is the deliverer, Sabbatai Zevi, our King and Messiah.

Seven MAIDENS *enter, among them* RACHEL *and* LEAH, *all in white, in the style of the Bokhara Jews.*

MAIDENS

(*Sing*) Come, behold, daughters of Zion, here is King Solomon in his crown; his mother has placed it on his head on the wedding day, on the day of joy.

SABBATAI ZEVI *in a white satin cloak, with a white crown embroidered with gold on his head, seats himself on the throne. The blowing*

of trumpets is heard. Seven youths come out. They are dressed in black velvet, richly decorated with gold thread. They sing. Behind them comes a young maiden in white. In her hands she holds a roll of the Torah, decorated with a gold crown. Over the white velvet cover of the Torah there hangs a golden tablet.

YOUTHS

(*Sing*)

Like a dove in the cleft of the rock,
Beautiful is his mate;
Her hair is like a herd
Of goats coming down from Mount Gilead;
Her teeth are like a herd of sheep coming
out of the river,
Her neck like the tower of David.

The MAIDEN *with the Torah seats herself at the right hand of* SABBATAI ZEVI.

ABRAHAM YAKHINI

(*Stands before* SABBATAI ZEVI *and speaks in the tone of a prophet*) Bridegroom, Messiah, God speaks thus: "I have destroyed My holy

Temple. The holy of holies I have blotted out, and with you I wander in captivity. And I have waited each day for a man to appear who should take the place here below which is taken by Me above—God in human form, called to deliver Me and the whole world from captivity. In Sabbatai Zevi, my son," saith God, "I have beheld that man; him do I raise up and proclaim holy king, the man exalted, and to him do I bind Myself with close bonds, in an inseparable union, and give him as a husband to My daughter, the Torah.

"With her let him be united, let him stamp her upon his heart, with her let him be as a brother with a sister, nourished from one mother's bosom, as with a sister whom men kiss and embrace unashamed, when meeting her on the street.

"Arise, and be prepared, bridegroom Messiah, lead thy bride under thy canopy with joy and singing. Thy time is ripe. Erect thy canopy."

The Prophets

God has withdrawn Himself into the heavens; He has wrapped Himself with clouds.

Man and the world He has left to Sabbatai Zevi, even to the "Holy King," the "Man Exalted." With him is the strength of God, with him the majesty of God.

ABRAHAM YAKHINI

Let the sound of the trumpets be borne afar; the king in all his holiness goeth under the canopy. Great is the Torah, the daughter of God; hold the standards of the canopy in readiness.

SABBATAI ZEVI *rises from his throne and goes toward the canopy. The* PROPHETS *sound the trumpets, music is heard. The seven* MAIDENS, *walking in pairs in front, sing.*

MAIDENS

Beautiful is King Solomon, going under
  the canopy
On the day of his felicity!
O, sing ye!
Earth and heaven, greet him with singing,
Hail his coming.
The bridegroom-king leads his bride

Under his canopy;
Of beech wood are the standards made,
Of rays of light are the curtains woven,
The couch is strewn
By the love of the daughters of Jerusalem.

SABBATAI ZEVI *takes his place under the canopy. Trumpets sound. Seven* YOUTHS *sing; the* MAIDEN *with the Torah accompanies them.*

YOUTHS

(*Singing*)
Oh, sanctify and praise his name
On the day of his joy.
The daughter of God is his bride,
God Himself the bride's father.

The MAIDEN *hands the Torah to* SABBATAI ZEVI *and goes out. The* YOUTHS *stand in two rows. The seven* MAIDENS *surround the* PROPHETS. *A procession of little children appears. The boys and girls hold palm branches in their hands.*

SABBATAI ZEVI

(*Grasping the Torah and holding it aloft: in a loud voice*) I wed thee for all time. And I

wed myself to thee by the four principles: righteousness, law, goodness, and mercy. And I unite with thee through the truth. And I know God.

CHILDREN

(*Sing to a musical accompaniment*)
Praise God! Praise Him in His holy place!
Praise Him with cymbals in the dance!
Praise Him on flutes and strings!
Praise Him on sounding brass!
Praise Him with the beating of drums!
Let all that live glorify the name of God!
Praise God!

SABBATAI ZEVI

(*Holding the Torah on high*) I have chosen for myself the daughter of God, the holy Torah. I unite myself to her in an eternal bond. Her love I wish to preserve. Along her paths I wish to walk. In her light let me be enlightened also. I wish to be made holy by her holiness. With her here on earth I illuminate the world. Let the heavens receive back again light and majesty, for earth shall

be lifted up to heaven. Let evil cease in man: his soul I make perfect. His spirit I exalt, that it may shine with her holiness. And may earth and man find redemption in sinlessness and purity. And may all be in harmony with her, and she with all. Amen!

ALL

Amen!

Suddenly an uproar is heard approaching in the street as if a great throng were drawing near; the clatter of wheels resounds; there is a noise of crashing; people shout and blow horns; the bellowing of bulls, the lowing of cows, and the clatter of hoofs can be heard; all this is mingled with the wild sound of horns, trumpets and drums. NATHAN AZATI *bursts in.*

NATHAN AZATI

O holy king, man-God! Thy miracle has appeared, thy word is fulfilled. Thy queen comes to thee in majesty and beauty. Flame burns in her eyes. Flame burns in her hair, and her fire has warmed hearts. From city to city, from country to country she has gone,

and has announced and revealed thy coming. Wheresoever she passed the dead came to life. Her words, her fire swept the dust from hearts, from hearts that have languished for thousands of years. She has come to thee, thy queen, thy chosen one, foreordained by thee thyself.

Wheresoever she has come, crowds have gathered about her. Her eyes have inflamed them, her hair has drawn them to her, and they have followed after her as after a light, as after welcome rain.

She has worked miracles; the heavens have submitted to her. Thunder and lightning have served her. On her lips thy word has become God. She has gathered people at the windows of thy house and prostrated them before thy feet. (*Noise and shouting are heard in the streets*)

Behold! There in majesty and beauty thy queen comes to thee.

At the door appear twelve youths dressed in white velvet cloaks. SARAH *is in their midst. She wears a black velvet robe adorned with large golden stars. The hem of the robe is*

decorated with silver embroidery; her bare feet are visible. On her forehead she has a golden ornament with brilliants. On her bosom, on a golden chain, over her heart, is a golden tablet on which the names of the twelve tribes of Israel are written.

SARAH

(*Standing at the door*) Behold, there is your King and God. (*She throws herself at the feet of* SABBATAI ZEVI *and kisses the hem of his garment*) Oh, cover my head; I have beheld my husband, my king. (*She moves from him.* SABBATAI ZEVI *comes out from under the canopy with the Torah and turns to the throne*) Oh, heaven, unfold thyself. Ye mountains, be made level with the valleys! Seas, dry up! The King takes his seat on his throne.

SABBATAI ZEVI

(*Sits down*) Who art thou?

SARAH

I am from thee thyself. I was created by thine act. Thou hast chosen me and made

me thine own. Thy soul and mine are twin branches on the same tree, joined by a divine kiss. From two flowers we have blossomed. Thou art life, I—death. Thou art commandment, I am sin. At the breasts of thy mother was I nourished. Our souls have found each other. We mingle our blood, life and death, sin and commandment. With thee, I am God, God in man. Without thee, I am nothing.

SABBATAI ZEVI

I have broken the thread which bound us; the intertwined branches I have separated and I have torn up the roots which knit our souls together. From other breasts have I begun to be nourished. (*Pointing to the Torah*) She is my bride. By one mother were we nourished. To her I am bound in holiness and purity.

SARAH

Thou art my husband. Thou couldst not loose our bond, thou couldst not tear up the roots of our souls. My eyes burn thee, my hair fascinates thee. For thou art the God-man, but man.

SABBATAI ZEVI

I have freed myself from thy power. Carnal desires I have torn from my body. I have found holiness. God has given to me His daughter. She is immortal. What is human is foreign to her. I will cleave unto her. Carnal desires I have torn from my body. I have become God.

SARAH

(*Bowing low before him*) Oh, man in God. I see thy glory. It looks out from thine eyes. I am human. With thee I have grown; for thee I have yearned, to thee I have been drawn. I see carnal nature in thine eyes; it looks at me from thy body. The mountains and the vales give me joy, the vales and the fields; and the sun when it rises and the sun when it sets, and the falling dew, and the night coming down. I am human. I am illumined by thee and proceed from out of thy body. And I yearn, I yearn. (*Suddenly*) Did not I gather the people before thy windows? It is I who aroused in them the thirst for thy words. My eyes inflamed them.

That which is mortal in me, my hair, led them on. My passion has kindled them. And I have gathered them as sheaves under the sickle and have laid them at thy feet. I am human and in my veins flows hot blood.

SABBATAI ZEVI

(*Arises*) Abraham Yakhini, my prophet; Samuel Primo, who servest as my memory!

ABRAHAM YAKHINI *and* SAMUEL PRIMO

Command, King and Messiah, we are here.

SABBATAI ZEVI

Go and disperse the people who have gathered before my windows. I have no need of those attracted hither by the passion of a woman, by her eyes and hair. (*He gives them the Torah, which he has been holding in his hands*) Go unto the people, raise the Torah high above them. Let the Torah gather people for me, people who are cleansed by her holiness. Let them walk into her heavenly light. Let her draw men to me only by her

holiness, men of unspotted souls, pure and freed from sin and shame.

SARAH

(*With energy*) Let us go to the people and we shall see after whom they will follow, whose power will draw them on. Will they follow after me or after her? She (*pointing to the Torah*)—she is holy and dead, pure and silent. The crowd follows me. By my fire it is drawn on. After my sin does it languish. In my death it lives.

SARAH, ABRAHAM YAKHINI, *and* SAMUEL PRIMO *go out with the Torah. The noise of the crowd is borne in from the street.*

SABBATAI ZEVI

(*Prayerfully rolling his eyes and raising his hands to heaven*) I am with them. I exalt them. I purify them. Souls, arise, arise! Ye must begin to shine. She debases them; their souls are heavy and stained. She drags them down to sin. Like leaden clouds, they sink in the sea. Death draws them on. Death

sets them on fire. (*Aloud*) I desire to purify you; I desire to purify you. I will take you to heaven. I summon you with the divine word. I will show you divine purity. They turn away from the divine word offered them, and they follow after the phantom beauty of a woman's eyes. They yield to the longings of their hearts.

A pause. All await in terror.

FIRST PROPHET

I behold: an immense multitude of souls are falling. Black as night, they fall from heaven into the abyss.

SECOND PROPHET

Heaven turns itself from the earth and wraps itself with clouds. I hear how the huge gates shut with a crash, and the earth is falling, falling.

THIRD PROPHET

I behold: lightning flashes in the sky like sputtering candles. And the earth grows heavy and black, and Satan lets loose his

fearful train; naked, with disheveled hair, the devils flit about the whole world. They seize upon straying souls and prayers which go not aloft.

ABRAHAM YAKHINI *and* SAMUEL PRIMO *enter again.*

ABRAHAM YAKHINI

Woe unto us! The people follow after her as after a torch. She is their way and their word.

SARAH *returns and approaches* SABBATAI ZEVI. *She proudly looks him straight in the eyes.*

NATHAN AZATI

(*Throwing himself at the feet of* SABBATAI) Our holy king! Thou hast become God for men. Thou art the bearer of His word. His might is in thee. If it is not in thy power to redeem the world and the people in His purity, then redeem them in His sin!

SABBATAI ZEVI

I am the servant of the God of Jacob. With

His Torah I desire to be united; along her ways I wish to go.

SARAH

(*Takes the hands of* ABRAHAM YAKHINI *and* SAMUEL PRIMO) His service is not service to heaven. He is the God-man. Heaven—heaven is the Lord's, but earth is given to men. Might is thine, thou art the ruler; they wish to serve thee, in thee there is strength and power over us. (*To the* PROPHETS) Look! Behold thy God-man! Glory to his name for ever and ever. Hallow and glorify the name of the "God-man."

PROPHETS

(*Falling to the ground and raising their hands to heaven*) Glory to Thee! Glory to Thee!

NATHAN AZATI

Thou art sent to men as a prophet. Pray to thy God. Let Him deliver us from the heavenly yoke and let Him give us redemption. He is mighty. Look, the people crowd

at his window and await his words. (*They fall on their knees*) May Thy name be made holy and glorious for ever and ever, our God and sovereign. Amen. As the "ancient holiness" reigns there in heaven, so thou, holy king, art set up on the earth. Thou art God in human form, in human semblance. In thy manifestation to us the world finds its true being. Thou art empowered to free the world from laws and rules. Thou even in sin canst redeem us. The word of God has passed unto us.

SAMUEL PRIMO

(*Falling at his feet*) King and God! At thy window the people await thy words. What shall I say unto them?

SABBATAI ZEVI

Go and tell them to serve God in holiness and purity. Through her (*pointing to the Torah*) I will grant them redemption.

SARAH

(*Pointing to the Torah*) Through her or

through me? With the thongs of laws and rules she has bound our hands. She has burned her seals upon us, appointed the way beforehand; she has ordained in advance what is yea and what is nay. She has placed before us hedges and obstacles. She has placed prohibitions on each road and life—and by her dost thou desire to convert us into slaves of God! O man, thou knowest our will, thou knowest our heart. Our blood is thy blood. Our yearning is thy yearning. In her thou hast eternal life, in me death. Oh, she is holy, she is pure, but she is dumb. In me thou hast fall and repentance, rupture and reconciliation, loneliness and an answering call. I am desire and abstinence. Like the sun I warm thy body, and as a stone I am cold. Choose, man-God, between me and her.

SABBATAI ZEVI

(*In meditation*) Through commandment or through sin? Eternal life or death? What is life without death? What is commandment without sin? (*Suddenly coming to himself*) To redeem—only in order to serve Him! To cast

off from oneself the carnal man only in order to become servants of God! "Thou knowest my heart?" No, ye gods, ye know not the heart of man. Humanity ye gave to us and that is man's divinity. I am a man even as they are men. In my veins blood flows. In my heart yearning lives. In my eyes there is vision. I have free will, free will. We only fulfil our duties! Nathan Azati, where art thou?

NATHAN AZATI

I am here, man-God.

SABBATAI ZEVI

Take with you Samuel, my follower; let Abraham Yakhini also be with you. Go unto the people and speak to them. Write letters and send them about through all countries, through all cities, wheresoever the law holds sway. "I, your God and King, Sabbatai Zevi, set up over the earth even as God in heaven, abolish each law and rule, cast down all barriers and foundations, undo all fetters and shackles: those that were imposed by a strange God, by the God of heaven. I am

your God, Sabbatai Zevi, by the power of God established on earth as God above is established in heaven. I deliver you with an eternal deliverance and I liberate you with eternal liberty. No longer is there over us either 'yea' or 'nay,' and man and God are free. Only the twenty-second day of the month of Tammuz, the day of the reconciliation of God, your God, with his queen, with his chosen Sarah, the daughter of Jesse (*he stretches forth his hand to* SARAH *and raises her from her knees; she stands beside him*)—let only that day be holy unto you, do not violate it with any work. Let it be for you as a day of gladness, a day of rejoicing and songs, and let your houses be illuminated with a bright light, for this day is the holy Sabbath, the great Sabbath of your Queen Sarah, the daughter of Jesse."

NATHAN AZATI, ABRAHAM YAKHINI *and* SAMUEL PRIMO

We will carry thy word unto the nations, to all the ends of the earth, our sovereign and God.

THE PROPHETS

(*Falling on the ground*) Glory to God, to our God, the anointed King, to the exalted man who has torn the fetters from our hands, permitted that which was forbidden, loosed that which was held consecrated, destroyed laws, abolished that which was sealed, today and for ever.

The blowing of horns is heard from the street. The people sound trumpets.

SCENE IV

At Gallipoli, in the fortress Migdal-Oz.[1] *The room is darkened. Shadows flicker in the faint light of oil lamps that are fastened to the ceiling. In the corners of the room incense smokes; it rises overhead in unbroken curling clouds.* SARAH *is sitting on a dais of peculiar style. She wears a black veil and a crown glistens on her head. Beside her sits* SABBATAI ZEVI. *Around a six-branched candlestick are placed* ABRAHAM YAKHINI, SAMUEL PRIMO, NATHAN

[1] Tower of strength.

AZATI, BASHI JOSEPH RAPHAEL, MATTATHIAS BLOCH, *and* MORDECAI HASID. *Farther off sit the* PROPHETS, CABALISTS *and* FOLLOWERS. *Before* SARAH *on a prayer table lies an open book.* RACHEL *and* LEAH, *wrapped in prayer shawls, are standing before the table and reading aloud. The crowd listens reverently.*

LEAH

(*Reads*) "Rejoice, O barren one, thou that didst not bear, break forth into singing and be glad, thou that didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the abandoned woman than of the married wife. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them enlarge the covering of thy tabernacles; spare not; lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes. For thou shalt spread abroad on the right hand and on the left, and thy seed shall possess the nations, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. Fear not; for thou shalt no longer be mocked. Grow not pale, for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth; and the reproach of thy widowhood shalt thou remember no more: for thy husband is

thy creator; His name is the Lord of Hosts and the Deliverer of Holy Israel, the God of all the world. God hath called thee to Him as a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, and as the cast-off wife of His youth. And thus saith the Lord to thee: 'I have forsaken thee for a little while, but with great mercy I will receive thee. In wrath I turned away My face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting grace will I have mercy on thee. Thus saith God, thy Deliverer.' "

NATHAN AZATI

Today is the great Sabbath of Queen Melliselda. Pray to her, serve her today. Glorify and praise her name. Today she can exalt you in magnificence.

THE CABALISTS

(*Dance around* SARAH, *singing*)
Thine eyes grow dark,
Thy tresses flame,
Thy husband is captivated by thee.
He desired to exalt himself to heaven,
He longed for the daughter of God,

But thou hast barred the way.
Thine eyes have captivated him,
Thy locks have entangled him,
Thou hast drawn him to the earth;
Glory to thee, glory!

SARAH

(*Kneeling before* SABBATAI ZEVI) Thou didst speak and it was accomplished according to thy word. Glory to thee! The people are possessed with terror for thee. The fortress in which they have imprisoned thee is thy palace. Thine oppressors and captors grovel before thee on their knees, praying to thee. The people follow after thee, await thee at the gates of the fortress; thy glory has spread over the whole earth and the world is lighted by thy glory. From East and West their prayers are borne unto thee. They await thee and have put their trust in thee.

SABBATAI ZEVI

(*Taking her by the hands*) What dost thou desire? Speak, my queen. I am ready to give thee the half of my kingdom.

SARAH

The year five thousand four hundred and eight draws nigh, foreordained by God in His holy Zohar. Thy kingdom is at hand, thy dominion is approaching; thou shalt pass over the people as a storm. Thou shalt spread out over the earth as a cloud. Ye kings, gather beneath his hill. God desires to divide the kingdom among you.

PROPHETS

(*Bowing and kneeling before* SABBATAI ZEVI) His kingdom draweth nigh, his dominion approacheth; the vengeance of God is a mantle for him. In the cloud he cometh unto us, in order to show his power over the nations and the lands. Glory to thee for ever and ever! Amen!

They blow upon trumpets. The PROPHETS *stand in two rows. At the right and the left are* ABRAHAM YAKHINI *and* SAMUEL PRIMO; NATHAN AZATI *is in front.*

SABBATAI ZEVI

(*Rising from his chair, while the people bow down*) I am Solomon, the son of David, the anointed king, the God of Israel. I rule in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. I am most terrible, being exalted above the kings of the earth. Mine eternal one abides in the city of Jerusalem, which is foreordained to become the center of the whole world. The year five thousand four hundred and eight is appointed by me for the overthrow of earthly governments, for the salvation of the world from strange gods, in order that I may take power over kingdoms in my own hand and under my own mercy. I shall divide the kingdoms of the world among my chosen ones. Joseph, the brother of the King and Messiah, I shall leave king over the nineteen rulers of the land of Israel; and let his permanent residence be the city of Izmir, which I exalt above other cities. I lay a golden crown on his head.

NATHAN AZATI *blows a trumpet.*

ALL

Hail to the king of Israel!

SABBATAI ZEVI

To Elijah, the second brother of the Messiah: in him do I place the soul of King Hezekiah and appoint him king over the kings of Judea.

NATHAN AZATI *blows a trumpet.*

ALL

Hail to the king of the kings of Judea!

SABBATAI ZEVI

To Moses, my old teacher, from the city of Izmir. Him I appoint king of the generations of Reuben and of Solomon, which live on the other side of the river Sambation.

NATHAN AZATI *blows a trumpet.*

The GUARDS *of the fortress standing by the door throw themselves at the feet of* SABBATAI ZEVI.

GUARDS

Holy king! Be merciful unto us. A prophet of God, sent to thee by God, desires to impart to thee the word of God.

SABBATAI ZEVI

(*Half alarmed*) A prophet of God? Is the word of God on his lips?

GUARDS

From afar he has come to thee; of thy name he has spread tidings to the people and lands. Now he stands by thy door with the word of God on his lips. By God was he sent to thee.

SABBATAI ZEVI

I desire not to hear prophecies which are sent by strange gods. I have broken the bond with Him; heaven is God's, but the earth is given to men! My time has now begun, my kingdom has come. I desire not to hear words from him.

The GUARDS *go out.*

SARAH

Thou hast chosen for thyself certain prophets. (*Pointing to* NATHAN AZATI) Thy gift of prophecy thou hast given over unto him. Other prophets thou knowest not—thou hast them not.

NATHAN AZATI

We know no God other than thee. His word and His power have passed unto thee. Thine hour has begun. Thy kingdom has come. Abide and rule. With thee is the power and with thee is the word.

SABBATAI ZEVI

Shut the doors and close the windows. I cannot listen to the prophet of strange gods.—I desire now to remain alone. I will divide the kingdoms at another time.

All but SARAH *and* SABBATAI ZEVI *go out.*

SARAH

(*Going to* SABBATAI ZEVI, *who sits covering his face with his hands*) Thine is the power,

thine is the divine word. In all the countries of the earth men are possessed by dread of thee. Thy glory, like the word of the prophet, advances through the world and makes heads to bow before thee. Thine advent is the hope of the people. And wheresoever thy name is carried, it kindles a light and uncovers new distances. Like the sun rising over the ocean, thou hast made thyself the God of the earth. The people pray to thee.

SABBATAI ZEVI

(*As if to himself*) Anguish gnaws my heart. I have rejected the word of God. I have spurned His daughter. For me the heavens are closed. No longer can I rise to them.

SARAH

I am the daughter of earth. I have brought thee the earth as my dowry. Come, I will show unto thee all the majesty of the world.

SABBATAI ZEVI

I was the bridegroom of the daughter of God; from under the wedding canopy did I

spurn my bride. Her couch I divided with another. I languish. Heaven is high and pure.

SARAH

Earth is low, but it is beautiful. I am its daughter. Thou didst lead me under the wedding canopy. Thou didst give me to drink of thy wine. Come, I will show thee my splendor. I will plant for thee forests of the trees of paradise, of palms and of cypresses. I will prepare for thee a couch of my hair. I will warm thee with my breast. The brook, tumbling among the stones, will sing thee a lullaby. Palm trees shall rock thy slumbers. I will traverse the whole earth; I will make captives with my voice; I will conquer men and women for thee.

SABBATAI ZEVI

I languish. Heaven is high and pure. My bride weaves her garments of heavenly blue and departs on high beyond the clouds, up to the throne of her father's glory.

Sarah

Of thy torrents of tears, turned into crystal among tombs, I will build for thee palaces, palaces amid roses and fir trees. I will go into the garden of my father, I will fall before the clusters of grapes. Wine flows from the mouth of the earth, milk gushes from her breasts. In milk and wine will I bathe my body. I will clothe myself with the plumage of doves and will come unto thee. I will bedeck myself with pearls; they will bring to thee the roaring of the sea and will shine in my hair like stars when night hangeth over the land of Israel. Like the foam of the sea they are white upon my feet. I will go up with thee into the mountains, I will hide with thee in the forests, in the dark nights, in the threatening storms. A garden inclosed is thy sister, thy bride; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Come, let us hide in the gardens. The grapes are ripe. The fig trees are in bloom; we will catch the little foxes that spoil the vines.

SABBATAI ZEVI

(*Almost in her embrace*) My bride has hidden herself in the clouds. Draw me on, I will run after thee; inflame my heart with one of thine eyes; burn my heart with one of thy tresses.

SARAH

I am black but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath scorched me. My mother's sons did evil to me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard I have not kept. (*With inspiration*) I charge you, ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up nor awaken love until it awakes of itself. (*In ecstasy*) My beloved saw me and came into his garden. His left hand was under my head, but his right hand embraced me.

SABBATAI ZEVI

(*Sings*) My dove is in the clefts of the rock, on the solitary footpath. Let me see thy

countenance, let me hear thy voice. Sweet is thy voice, and thy face is comely.

SARAH

(*Sings, lying in the embrace of* SABBATAI ZEVI) I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying: "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." (*Artlessly*) I have put off my shift; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?

SABBATAI ZEVI

(*Suddenly frees himself from her*) Who has come into my tent? (*In fright he seizes* SARAH *by the hand*) Dost thou hear? The word of God is here, in this room. Shut the doors and close the windows. I do not wish to hear the word of God.

VOICE OF NEHEMIAH COHEN

(*Borne along by the wind*) In vain dost thou lock thy door against the word of God. How

shalt thou escape from it? "In the clefts of the rocks shall I find thee; even in the darkness of caverns do I have my habitation," saith the Lord.

SABBATAI ZEVI

I have freed myself from Thee. I have torn asunder my bond with heaven. Thy word is still with me.

NEHEMIAH COHEN *suddenly appears in his white garments, wrapped in his prayer shawl, even to his head. It is dark.*

NEHEMIAH COHEN

God speaks thus: "I have taken from thee thy strength. I deprive thee of words. I have determined not to give unto man divine mercy, for man is of the earth and his lusts are of the earth. From the earth he cometh and to the earth he returneth." (*He vanishes.*

ACT III

SCENE V

A great, wide field around the fortress Migdal-Oz; the field is bathed in the burning light of the Eastern sun. It is the Jewish New Year's Day (Rosh Hashanah), the year of the Messiah, the year five thousand four hundred and eight. There are Jews from different places and countries: Spanish Jews in long black mantles with black silk ribbons on their heads; Polish Jews in furs; Turkish Jews in long white robes; Jews from Bokhara in variegated silk robes and broad fur caps. The fanatical followers of SABBATAI ZEVI *crowd in the field around the tall, frowning fortress. The whole community of Jews, in white tunics and prayer shawls, stand in the place like a forest of trees; and, swaying from side to side, as though moved by the wind, they pray. A* CANTOR *with a choir stands behind the prayer table.*

CANTOR

(*Chants*) Sound abroad the great trumpet for our liberation, raise the banner under which all those who are scattered over the earth must gather, and assemble those of us who are divided among the nations from all the ends of the earth, and lead us into Thy city of Jerusalem, into the Temple, with singing, with eternal joy.

The crowd in white attend to the speech of the CANTOR *with reverence and humility. People of another community, thinking to cleanse themselves from sin for the day of the coming of the Messiah, stand buried to the neck in the earth, so that the whole field seems a compact mass of singing human heads.*

CANTOR

Inhabitants of earthen huts! Why do ye raise your eyes in presumption? For there is no distinction between man and beast. We acknowledge that we are worms, that our bodies are fragments of clay. How, then, can presumption make its nest in our hearts?

Yea, and of what profit to man, when his end is the grave?

Here and there are seen Jews lying on the ground; servants from the synagogue flog them with forty lashes of the whip, while the men who are purifying themselves beat themselves with their fists over the heart.

CANTOR

Purify our bodies, purify our souls. The day of the Messiah is at hand. It has begun, it has begun!

A group of Jews run across the stage.

FIRST PROPHET

This day hath begun; the year five thousand four hundred and eight hath begun. The King cometh to receive his kingdom into his own hands. Today is his day. Today the power returneth to him.

SECOND PROPHET

"Purify your bodies, purify your souls. Accomplish the last sin, for no longer do I desire that ye sin," saith God.

(*He runs across the stage.*

A PROPHETESS

(*Around her a group of women is dancing a strange, wild dance*) Rejoice, rejoice, daughters of Jerusalem; cast off your mourning garments; shake off the ashes from your hair. Deck yourselves in holiday garments, with perfumes anoint your bodies. There rises for thee a light through the son of Jesse from Bethlehem.

(*She runs off.*

A group of Polish Jews appear in long black robes and fur caps; they have long black curls in front of their ears. The first ENVOY *reads them a letter from Lwow, in the tone in which the Polish Jews read the Talmud.*

ENVOY

"Since ye inquire and wish to know of the goats which Rabbi Israel from Islem, son of the late Abraham, may his soul be sanctified, purchased here, and which raised a quarrel among the kinsmen, who affirmed that the purchase was unsuccessful and the price not fair, so we inform you that this merchandise

is good and in great demand in all countries, and whoever spreads an ill report of it shall have to answer according to the law. And as it was valued by great merchants, experienced in trading, there can be no doubt that the profit will be great. It is only necessary to await the market day, if God is pleased; and then we may sell at a good profit."

ONE *to* ANOTHER

Dost thou understand? Rabbi Israel of Islem, the son of Abraham . . .

ANOTHER

(*Deep in thought, beats himself on the forehead*) What do the goats really mean?

SECOND ENVOY

(*Explains to them in the same tone as before*) Evidently that is only an allegory, a suggestion. By Rabbi Israel he means the Messiah, who is the son of Abraham. We, the poor Jews, are the goats; and since many men are spreading evil reports that the price is not

fair—he means, which God forbid! that it is a false Messiah—therefore witnesses, persons experienced in buying and selling—by them he means good, devout, blameless Jews—have testified that the goods are genuine goods, that it is only necessary to await the market day—by that he means the great day, which will come in the present year, if it please God. And there will be great profit. Now do you understand?

THE CROWD

(*As if coming to its senses*) Ah!

(*They run off with great joy and shouts.*

There appears a long procession of small boys and girls. They bring in a canopy. The strangers dance in front of the children and sing.

STRANGERS

Lead the children under the wedding canopy. Perfect those souls which are still near the throne of God. The Messiah comes. The dead arise from their graves. The day appointed by God begins.

(*They go out.*

Another group of men and women enters; in front of them is a half-naked woman; they dance and sing.

MEN *and* WOMEN

Tear the roofs from your houses; burn your possessions. God has departed into heaven; the earth and man He has given unto the Messiah. Tear apart the shackles, cut the thongs asunder; the law is dead, the word is wiped away; the forbidden is permitted, the inaccessible is disclosed.

(*They run off.*

On the stage, in front of the fortress, placing themselves opposite to SABBATAI ZEVI, *appear* NATHAN AZATI, ABRAHAM YAKHINI, SAMUEL PRIMO, BASHI JOSEPH RAPHAEL, MATTATHIAS BLOCH *and* MORDECAI HASID. *The people become silent.*

NATHAN AZATI

I am sent to you by God. He speaks thus: "Lo, the time draws nigh when ye shall not have to torture your bodies; I have purified you. Your souls I have raised up through My

only son, My anointed Sabbatai Zevi. Him I have set in Mine own place. I have made him God over man and the earth. My word is with him and My power is with him. Today, on the first day of the year five thousand four hundred and eight, the day on which, by My foreordination, My power goeth over unto him, My spirit rests upon him; and he, sounding a great trumpet, is calling you from the four ends of the earth and gathers you near Mount Zion. His fear he spreads abroad throughout all the nations, and he comes down in a cloud to take the crown from the head of the sultan and to place it upon his own head. Glorify his name! Meet him with hymns. The King cometh to reveal to you concerning his kingdom."

They blow trumpets. SABBATAI ZEVI *appears on the stage in royal robes with a large golden crown on his head.* SARAH *conducts him. The people greet him with ecstasy, falling on their knees. The crowd exults.*

CROWD

Glory to our sovereign! Glory to our King!

Glory to our deliverer, to the anointed of the God of Jacob! Let his splendor be increased! Let his kingdom be exalted. May his heart be gladdened with honors, and may his throne stand fast for ever and ever!

ENVOYS *present a message from the Spanish Jews in Amsterdam. At their head are* ISAAC NAAR *and* ABRAHAM PEREIRA. *Both bow before* SABBATAI ZEVI *and read the following.*

ISAAC NAAR *and* ABRAHAM PEREIRA

"To thee, King of Kings, to thee, the anointed of the God of Jacob, our king, and the deliverer of the Jewish people, to thee, our glory and pride, to thee, from thy most worthless slaves to the most beloved of beloved sons, to thee we appear with obeisance and bow before the throne of thy majesty; and we, as one man, have signed this paper in token that we believe in thee, of whom tidings have come unto us, and with love we lay on ourselves subjection to the divinely hallowed kingdom, which is the foundation of all kingdoms. All that is mighty is subordinated to thee. One thing we ask our

ruler and king, that he turn not away his face from us. Grant us to hear thy word, tell us the paths by which we must go and the work which we must do. Should we hasten to Bethlehem to touch the dust of thy majesty, or does it behoove us to wait for the help of God until that day when the sound of the trumpet shall be borne abroad and thou shalt summon us from the lands of exile? We do not know what we should do. Our eyes are turned to thee, and we wait with great joy thy commands. We desire to behold our King. And not only for ourselves do we send out messages and beseech and pray, but for all the Jews, thy slaves, for those exiled from Spain who now live among us. All of us, as one man, bow to thee; we prostrate ourselves before the throne of the glory of our King and Sovereign on the holy Mount in Jerusalem. Glory to thy name for ever and ever! Here in Amsterdam on the twenty-fourth day of the month Elul, in the year of the completion of the war for Zion, in the week when they read the section, 'God in His great mercy will bring thee back from

captivity.' Such are the words of the youngest and most worthless of thy slaves, ready to fulfil all thy commands, believing sons of believers, all assembled members of the congregation, 'The Crown of the Torah.' "

SAMUEL PRIMO *comes down and takes the address; the* ENVOYS *from Amsterdam withdraw; the crowd falls upon its knees and quietly whispers prayers, as if awaiting the word of God.*

NATHAN AZATI

(*To* SABBATAI ZEVI) Thine hour has come; thy might is with thee: take the trumpet in thine hands and sound it. Sound it toward the East and toward the West, speak the word of God, place the crown on thy head and set us free. The people are waiting, they await deliverance.

SABBATAI ZEVI

I have no words for the people; I have not strength to sound the trumpet. I had a golden crown, the gift of my bride, the Torah. It has been taken from me. I had a golden trumpet to summon the East and the West;

it has vanished. The word of God was on my lips for the people. I have forgotten it; I cannot recall it.

SARAH

I took the commandment from thee and gave sin unto thee. I stole from thee eternal life, but for it I gave thee death. I drew thee down from heaven, but in return for it laid at thy feet the earth. I drove from thee the holy spirit; in recompense Satan has entered thy service. (*She points to the people*) Behold how many souls he has gathered for thee; they follow after thee and bow to thee. Cast to them thy word and it will act as blood boiling on the fire.

SABBATAI ZEVI

Disperse the people, scatter the crowd. I have no word that I may speak; I have no might that I may display. From under the canopy I drove my bride. She ascended into heaven to her father, and I forgot the word of God which was imparted to me through the prophet. I have forgotten it, lost it; I know not what to say.

SARAH

Satan has placed another word on thy lips. He has made thee the God of the earth. (*To* NATHAN AZATI) Take a trumpet in thy hands; sound it right and left; make known the coming of God. God has come in the form of man. On your knees, young and old! (*All the six, corresponding to the six candles of the Menorah,*[1] *fall on their knees before* SABBATAI ZEVI. NATHAN AZATI *sounds a trumpet, the people exult*) They are sounding the trumpet for the Messiah! They are sounding the trumpet for the Messiah!

NATHAN AZATI

(*Turning to the people*) Sons of Israel, behold your pride; the son of God has come unto you. "My time hath come," saith God. Today is the day of redemption. I take God's word and His power to rule over earth and mankind. And I set you free from laws and commandments. I set you free with that divine word which is on my lips and by that divine power which is in my hands.

[1] Candlestick.

The people exult. Many leap for joy.

PEOPLE

Savior and deliverer! Glory to thee, Glory!

SABBATAI ZEVI

I had the divine crown; I have lost it. I had the word of God, and I have forgotten it.

A breeze seems to be borne through the crowd. The people, as if bereft of their senses, circle around in a wild dance and drown the voice of SABBATAI ZEVI. *In the crowd men and women are mingled together, young and old; they join hands; some fall on the ground and speak as if delirious. Some tear the garments from the women. Here and there groups of dancers form around* SABBATAI ZEVI; *half-naked women hold each other by the hands and sing.*

WOMEN

Tear the roofs from your houses; burn your possessions. God has departed into heaven; the earth and man He has given unto the Messiah. Tear apart the shackles, cut the

thongs asunder; the law is dead, the word is wiped away; the forbidden is permitted, the inaccessible is disclosed. Glory to thee, glory!

Suddenly NEHEMIAH COHEN *appears on a hillock, dressed like a Turkish dervish; he is like a man half-crazed.*

NEHEMIAH COHEN

(*Shouting from the hillock*) And God spake to me thus: "Get ye hence, serve a God who is not a God (*he points to his turban*) and pray to a tree and bow to a stone. (*He does so*) And go unto My people of Israel and say unto them: 'Behold how ye serve a God who is not a God. Behold how ye pray to a stone and a tree!' Woe unto you! The wind shall carry away your prayer. Your hope is a day that is past. For ye pray to a man whose beginning is in the earth. (*He points to* SABBATAI ZEVI) My word is taken from him and My power is no longer with him."

From afar are seen approaching Turkish soldiers, preceded by dervishes.

SCENE VI

A hall in the court of SULTAN MOHAMMED IV
SABBATAI ZEVI *and* HAKIM-BASHI GVIDAM

HAKIM-BASHI GVIDAM

(*To* SABBATAI ZEVI, *who is standing motionless at one side*) Who art thou? Whence cometh thy strength? Our soldiers trembled before thee. The cords with which they wished to bind thee seemed to melt away in flame, in their hands. The soldiers of the Sultan, sent to take thee to prison, beholding thee, fell on their knees before thee, forgot the word of their commander and began to pray to thee. Thy prison they turned into a palace for thee and as after a divinity did they follow thee, both old and young. And suddenly thy strength forsook thee. And thy hands, like Samson's hair falling at Delilah's feet, lost their strength. Who has extinguished the divine fire in thy face? Who has lulled to sleep thine eyes? Or is thy power but sleeping, to rouse itself later with greater strength? And like Samson, dost thou grip

with thy hands at the foundations of the house to destroy thyself with it? Or, perhaps, God has remembered His people of Israel and has sent thee to them as a deliverer, having given unto thee the kingdom of this world? Speak: I am of thy race, only I have gone over to another God, and have become the Sultan's court physician, but my heart has not turned away, my blood has not changed. I am attached to my race even as a tree transplanted into another soil longs for its native forest and its native sky and its native earth. I have come to speak with thee on this matter. The whole court is trembling before thy mysterious strength. The Sultan makes inquiries concerning thee and his subjects speak of thee as of God. Manifest thy strength once more. Let the divine fire once more glow in thine eyes. Let the divine blessing once more shine forth from thy face. Command, and sovereigns and subjects will yield to thee. (*The notes of trumpets are heard*) What is that? Do I hear the sound of trumpets? The sovereign of the land is coming to thee. Be God, Man!

(*He withdraws.*

SABBATAI ZEVI

(*Coming forward*) I have caused Thee to tremble; Thou, the Creator of man, Thou hast seen my power which grew forth from the strength which Thou Thyself gavest me. Man began to forget Thee and acknowledged as his creator a man like unto himself. For Thee the heavens on high are too little; for Thee there are too few angels with eternal songs of praise; Thou desirest the earth; Thou desirest man with his death, and man's free will also torments Thee. Thou desirest that he bring sin likewise as a sacrifice. Angelic goodness no longer satisfies Thee. In Thee the angels' songs of praise no longer find an echo; for evil is not in their power. They know not what privations are, only devotion and goodness are their calling. Thou art attracted to human weaknesses. Thou dost provoke the human will. To contradict and to oppose is what man desires; Thou dost desire only submission and praise. The heart of man is inclined to evil; Thou dost require of him only

goodness. And Thou gavest to him a commandment, and didst set against it sin, and didst promise him in return for the commandment eternal paradise, and for sin, eternal hell. Thou didst send me to the people, Thou gavest me the strength to draw to Thee their souls, to subject to Thee their death, and to call forth hymns to Thee and to make them bow before Thee. But Thou didst see that man lifteth himself up and doth acknowledge man as his God. And Thou wast frightened, didst take from me my strength; Thou didst extinguish Thy light in my eyes, and didst blot out Thy radiance from my face. And Thou dost desire to give me over into the hands of men, to give me up to shame and scorn in order thereby to glorify Thy name. On my head Thy myrrh was poured and I will not give Thee over to mockery before men. Divinity Thou hast taken from me, but humanity remains to me. The commandment Thou hast taken from me; Thou hast stolen from me the holiness of my eyes: but sin still remains to me, and with it I will serve him who now rules over man here on earth.

The sound of trumpets is heard. SULTAN MOHAMMED IV *with his suite enters. In the suite are* MUFTI VANNI *and* HAKIM-BASHI GVIDAM, *and also the* KAIMAKAM OF ADRIANOPLE. *All keep on their guard with* SABBATAI ZEVI; *they evidently experience unconscious fear. They take their places.*

KAIMAKAM OF ADRIANOPLE

Thou didst desire to see him, great sovereign. Behold this man who has disturbed thy whole realm, dared to proclaim himself ruler in thy dominions, and without thy knowledge, great Sultan, to make thy subjects serve him.

SULTAN MOHAMMED

(*Not allowing* SABBATAI ZEVI *to approach*) Who art thou, that didst find in thyself strength to draw unto thee my subjects, to make them believe in thee and serve thee? How couldst thou instil faith in thy sorceries into those who pray to Allah and his prophet? What is thy strength, holy or unclean?

SABBATAI ZEVI

(*Proudly, his former strength suddenly asserting itself*) Who am I? I am set by God over the earth. I am the creator of man and am his kingly image. My time has come. My servitude is over. And God, departing back into the realm of heaven, has left to me, to His son, His anointed, the dominion of the earth. For man I am a commander, the image of his ruler. And by the hand of the prophet of the God of Jacob my head is anointed with the myrrh of David. I have become the anointed of God. With me are His power and His word. And I have come to thee to take the crown from thy head.

Terror takes possession of all; all respectfully make way before him; some fall on their knees, stretching out their hands to heaven. SABBATAI ZEVI *suddenly loses his strength; his voice falls. He drops before the* SULTAN *with prayer and entreaty.*

SABBATAI ZEVI

Thou dost ask who I am, great sovereign. I am a poor, poor Jew who lives only by thy

mercy, great Sultan. I am a poor, poor Jew who is unworthy that thou, King, shouldst look upon him. I journeyed into the land of Israel, gathered money for the poor Jews who live in thy realm, great Sultan. Am I to blame that they pray to me? (*A short pause. As if remembering something, he recollects himself, his whole body quivers, he looks about threateningly. The faces around grow pale, but again suddenly his strength forsakes him and he throws himself at the feet of the* SULTAN) I know no other commander, no other sovereign than thee, great Sultan. Thy faith is my faith. Thy God is my God. Command and I will kiss the feet of thy Sheikh-ul-Islam. (*He falls at the feet of the Supreme Mollah*) O holy servant of God, receive me under the shadow of thy holy faith. May Allah take me under his merciful protection. And may the spirit of Mohammed be poured over me. (*He tears the turban from a dervish, puts it on his head and cries aloud:*) Great is Allah and Mohammed is his prophet!

The SULTAN *stretches forth his hand to him.*

SULTAN MOHAMMED

I have forgiven thee. My mercy shall be poured upon thee. From this day thy name shall be Mohammed Effendi, and the most beautiful of my slave girls shall be thy wife.

EPILOGUE

The stage setting of the first act. Only on the side toward the mountain a wall with yawning gaps is represented in perspective. A number of intersecting paths lead up the mountain. In the air there is an oppressive stillness, as before a storm. In the distance by the wall sits NEHEMIAH COHEN *with his shoes removed. His head is sprinkled with ashes; he reads from a prayer book; along one of the paths there wanders a* TALL OLD JEW *with a staff in his hand and a wallet on his back.*

TALL OLD JEW

(*Talking aloud to himself and looking about*) Have ye not seen? Have ye not heard? They told us that the Messiah had come; that he had gathered around this mountain the Jews from all the corners of the earth. Here on high (*he points to the summit of the mountain*) must he sound the trumpet. And then the dead will rise from their graves. Have ye not seen? Have ye not heard? (*He wanders*

along, wishing to climb up, but becomes confused and strikes the wrong path) Who will show me the path up the mountain? I wish to go up to the Messiah. Have ye not seen? Have ye not heard?

From the mountain amid gusts of wind, to the accompaniment of wild, passionate bursts of music, SARAH *descends with disheveled hair, half-naked. A wild crowd of men and women, also with disheveled hair, run after her, as if borne along by the wind.*

CROWD

Tear off the fetters; cut the thongs asunder. The law is dead, the word is wiped away. That which was forbidden is granted, that which has been disclosed is attainable.

TALL OLD JEW

(*Speaks to them*) Good people, can ye not tell me where the Messiah lives?

ONE OF THE CROWD

Come with us. We are going to the land where man is God, where his will is the law.

TALL OLD JEW

I understand not thy words. (*He flees from the man who has addressed him, and calls to the crowd*) Good people (*he cries to all*) have ye not seen? Have ye not heard?

He wanders along the paths; suddenly he sees NEHEMIAH COHEN *sitting by the wall;* NEHEMIAH *has a trumpet in his hand and beside him there is a vessel of oil.*

TALL OLD JEW

Tell me, good Jew, and pardon me, have you not seen?

NEHEMIAH COHEN

Greeting! (*He stretches forth his hand.*

TALL OLD JEW

Peace unto you.

NEHEMIAH COHEN

Remove thy shoes, for the place on which thou standest is holy ground.

TALL OLD JEW

(*Taking off his shoes*) I have come from a strange land. It was spoken among us that the Messiah had appeared. I have left my possessions. I have forsaken all and come to the Messiah. Have ye not seen? Have ye not heard?

NEHEMIAH COHEN

Sit down upon the earth and rend thy garments. (*He slits the Jew's garment*) Woe unto us! For our sins the chains have grown still heavier on the hands of the Messiah. (*He points to the black holes and says*)

Behold from whence his groans proceed. There he lies bound. Dost thou hear how the chains clank? (*From the black holes is audible the clank of chains*) From the time of the destruction of the Temple, from the moment he was born, each time when he hears the groans of the Jews he tries to break his chains and then one can hear a clanging and a clanking noise and the rattle of chains. But God has vowed not to release him till the Jews, by the strength of the souls which he

put within them, tear the chains from his hands. And he bites his lips. For through you he will come. What can he proclaim when ye do not exalt yourselves? What can he prepare when ye are not prepared? (*He points to the trumpet*) The trumpet is in my hand. The oil is with me. We await you!

TALL OLD JEW

(*Rising and lifting his arm*) I believe with true faith that the Messiah will come, and although he tarrieth long, yet I await him day and night. He will come!